Trinidadian Creole

Trinidadian Creole is a creole language commonly spoken throughout the island of Trinidad in Trinidad and Tobago. It is distinct from Tobagonian Creole – particularly at the basilectal level[2] – and from other Lesser Antillean English creoles.

English is the country's official language (the national standard variety is Trinidadian English), but the main spoken languages are Trinidadian English Creole and Tobagonian English Creole. Both creoles contain elements from a variety of African languages. Trinidadian English Creole is also influenced by French and French Creole (Patois).[3]

Trinidadian English Creole	
Native to	Trinidad and Tobago

Language family	English Creole
	• Atlantic
	   • Eastern
	     • Southern
	       • **Trinidadian English Creole**

Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`trf`
Glottolog	`trin1276 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/trin1276)`[1]
Linguasphere	`52-ABB-au (http://www.linguasphere.info/?page=inner&id_inner=1018460)`

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History

Like other Caribbean English-based creoles, Trinidadian English Creole has a primarily English-derived vocabulary. The island also has a creole with a largely French lexicon, which was in widespread use until the late nineteenth century, when it started to be gradually replaced, due to influence and pressure from the British.[4]

Spanish, a number of African languages (especially Yoruba), Chinese (mainly Cantonese, with some Hakka, and now Mandarin) and Trinidadian Hindustani have also influenced the language.[5]

Phonological features

Although there is considerable variation, some generalizations can be made about the speech of Trinidad:

- Like a number of related creoles, Trinidadian English Creole is non-rhotic, meaning that /r/ does not occur after vowels, except in recent loanwords or names from Spanish, Hindi/Bhojpuri, and Arabic.[6]
- In mesolectal forms, *cut*, *cot*, *caught*, and *curt* are all pronounced with [ɒ].[7]

- The dental fricatives of English are replaced with dental/alveolar stops.[8]

Usage

Both Trinidad and Tobago[9] feature creole continua between more conservative Creole forms and forms much closer to Trinidadian English, with the former being more common in spontaneous speech and the latter in more formal speech.[10] Because of the social values attributed to linguistic forms, the more common varieties (that is, more creolized forms) carry little prestige in certain contexts.[11]

Example words and phrases

- *back chat*: insolence.[12]
- *bad-john*: a bully or gangster.[12][13]
- *chinksin*: miserly; distributing less than one could or should.[14]
- *calypso*: a musical or lyrical comment on something, particularly popular during Carnival.[12]
- *dougla*: a person having both Indian and African parentage.[12]
- *maco*: someone who gets into other people's business.[12]
- *maljo*: an evil spell of misfortune cast out of envy.[14]
- *pothound*: a mongrel dog of no specific breed; mutt.[14]
- *tabanca*: heartbreak.[12]
- *ups kabat*: a type of game played with marbles.[15]

See also

- Trinidadian English
- Tobagonian Creole

Notes

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2. Youssef & James (2004:508, 514)
3. Jo-Anne Sharon Ferreira. (A Brief Overview of) The Sociolinguistic History of Trinidad & Tobago (https://web.archive.org/web/20110724162817/http://vsites.unb.br/il/liv/crioul/textos/ferreira.htm). University of the West Indies. unb.br
4. Youssef & James (2004:510–511)
5. "Trinidad English Creole" (https://apics-online.info/surveys/6).
6. Amastae (1979:191)
7. Youssef & James (2004:516)
8. Youssef & James (2004:517)
9. Minderhout (1977:168–169)
10. Winford (1985:352–353)
11. Winford (1985:353)
12. tobagowi.com (http://www.tobagowi.com/culture/dictionAF.htm) dictionary of terms for Trinidad and Tobago

13. [1] (https://triniinxisle.com/2018/09/09/trinidad-slangs-badjohn/) Bad John
14. WiWords.com (http://www.wiwords.com/browse/Trinidad+and+Tobago/all) dictionary of the West Indies
15. Winer & Boos (1993:46)

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Further reading

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- TriniInXisle Compilation of Trinidad Slangs from Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago from Winer, Lisa (https://triniinxisle.com/2018/06/30/trinidad-slangs/)